

HABS  
DC,  
WASH,  
351-

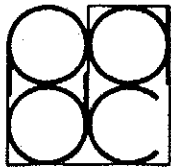
H. Baum & Son  
616-618 E Street, NW  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-610

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127



**PENNSYLVANIA  
AVENUE  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION**  
425 13TH STREET, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

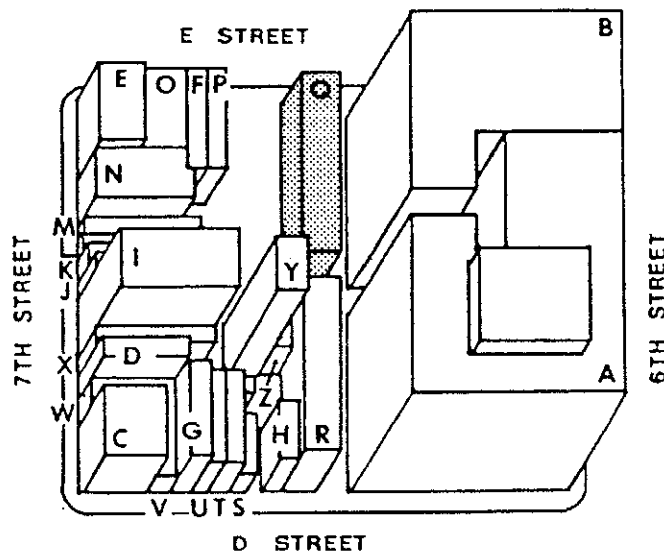
GENERAL CONSULTANTS

ANDERSON NOTTER/MARIANI  
GENERAL PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT  
DEVROUX & PURNELL  
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS  
DAVID MCLAREN HART & ASSOCIATES  
PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT  
MONK DUNSTONE ASSOCIATES  
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAMBUILDING DOCUMENTATION

HABS  
DC,  
WASH,  
351-

H. Baum & Son  
616 - 618 E Street, NW  
Lot 830



This documentation was produced for mitigation purposes by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Additional documentation exists for Square 457, within which this structure stands. For photographs, historical, and descriptive data on Square 457, see HABS No. DC-597.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Located midway in the block, this long rectangle is bound on the east and south by the service alleys that penetrate this square. On the west, the once-adjacent structures have been demolished to make way for a parking lot, consequently leaving an exposed party wall with a ghost silhouette imprinted on it. The building covers the entire site, measuring twenty-nine feet wide by one hundred eighty-eight feet deep. It has a basement plus three stories above grade, enclosed by brick exterior walls and topped by a flat roof. The red brick on the rear and side elevations is laid in common bond. Window openings are square headed with industrial type metal framed awnings occurring one per bay per floor. The street facade on the north is preferentially treated by being clad in a beige brick of striated texture. The wall is simple, but well-organized and balanced. The style is that indeterminate expression common in the later transitional period into modern architecture. It utilizes definite neoclassical elements on the storefront, while the window arches are adaptations of the Georgian style. The articulation of floors is reminiscent of the classical traditions, but the elements are too bare and simple to classify into classical nomenclature.

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Built for the H. Baum and Son establishment in 1926, this company has been the building's only tenant. The structure was designed by an engineer, G.G. Joehler, apparently without the intervention of an architect (Building Permit no. 8558, 4/4/1926). The building's functionalist design is evident in its lateral elevations, structure and interior layout. The architectural features of the facade were eclectically selected, and because of their sparseness and simplicity of the organization, add a touch of elegance to an otherwise utilitarian building.

The building maintains a good relationship with the existing traditional environment into which it was inserted. The projecting storefront, facade width-height proportion, sidewalk building line and the floor spacing are all well within the district's idiomatic norms. While the horizontal proportions of the central window bay could have proven disruptive, the overall open-solid wall relation redeems the facade. Finally, the inclusion of classical terms, even if out of context, provide direct iconographic continuity with the surrounding buildings. This is especially clear in the small but classic coping molding which keeps the unwritten rules of the district's skyline.

## SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

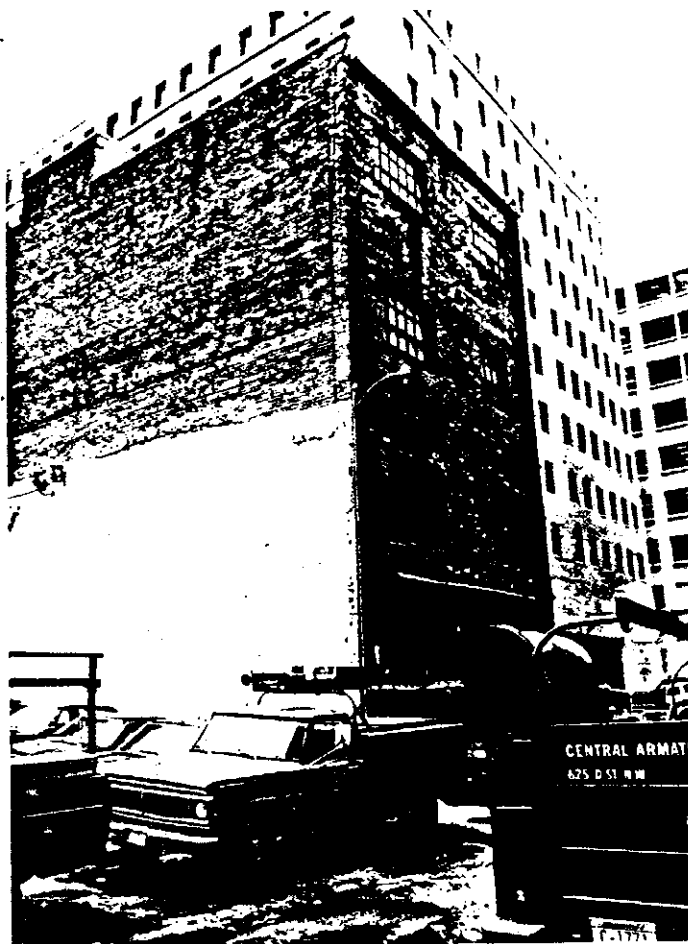
Facade: The projecting storefront consists of two show windows framing a recessed entryway at the enter. The entire projection is covered by a simple classical cornice now painted white. Above, the two upper floors have a symmetrical organization using a large horizontal window at the center, flanked by narrower openings at each side. On both floors, each window tier sits on a belt course of brick headers spanning the full facade. In turn, the individual window lintels are jack arches of gauged brick with a larger stone voussoir as keystone. To visually segregate the floors, a stone band flush with facade plane has been inserted at each level, spanning the width defined by the other jambs of the narrow openings. The roof parapet features terminal ornamental coursing, also flush with the facade plane, and consisting of alternating groupings of three headers with three stacked bricks. The wall is capped by a metal cornice with a discreet cavetto molding.

Interiors: The building interior structure consists of a steel skeleton frame, with component members riveted in place. Steel columns are encased on three sides in the lateral walls and support beams that span the width of the building and are wrapped by the pressed metal ceiling. The building divides into twelve bays. The interior spatial layout is repetitive in all floors, including the basement: the space is entirely open, with a free-standing enclosed stair with a straight run on the building's longitudinal axis occurring on the fourth bay from the south. The large room is modulated by dropped beams clad in pressed tin. The intermediate ceilings at each bay feature pressed tin plates of a shallow coffer design, surrounded by a pressed tin perimeter cover with fluting. Further modulation is provided by a single large window on the east wall of each bay. The building has always been used as an office furniture store.

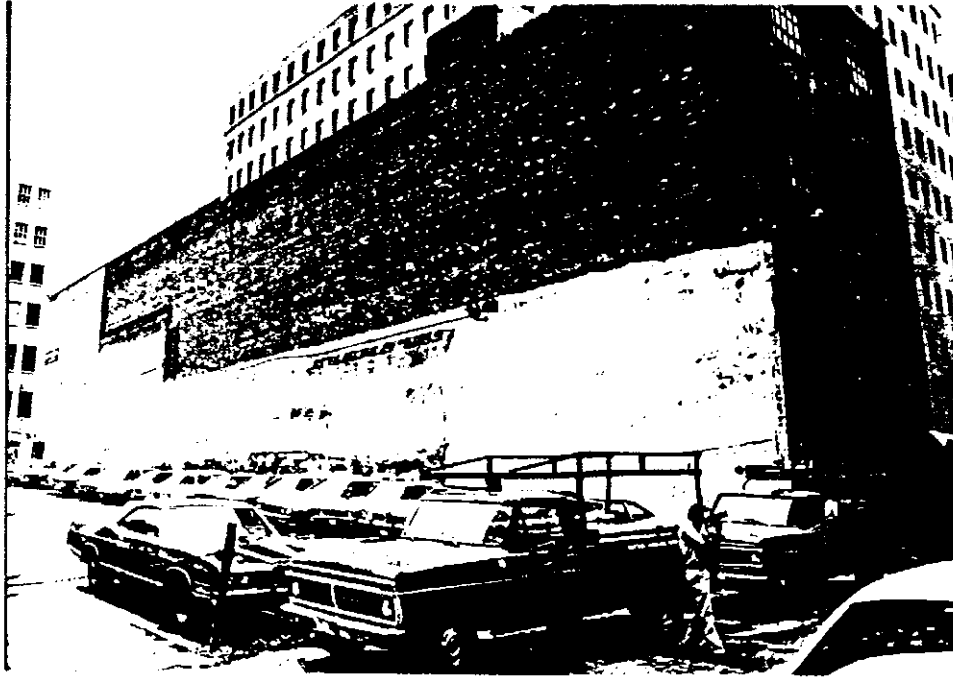
September 1979



E STREET (NORTH) FACADE



OBLIQUE VIEW OF ALLEY  
(SOUTH) ELEVATION



OBLIQUE VIEW OF WEST WALL

Lot 17 (Sublots 829, 830)  
616, 618 E Street, N.W.

Lot 17, as originally platted, was rectangular in shape measuring 54 feet along the E Street side, and 187 feet deep. Later, lot 17 was subdivided into two sublots designated 829 and 830.

1819.....Lot 17 was assessed in its entirety to John C. Calhoun.

1824.....John C. Calhoun was assessed \$1280.00 for the ground and \$6000.00 for the improvements to lot 17.

1829/33..James Barbour was assessed \$2461.00 for lot 17. The improvements to the property were valued at \$6000.00.

1844.....Lot 17 was assessed in two parts. The western part of the lot was assessed to R.C. Washington for \$1324.00 and the eastern part of the lot was assessed to A.M.O. Davis for \$1630.00.

1859.....The western part of lot 17 was assessed to J.C. Hall for \$4114.00. The western part was assessed to A.W.O. Davis for \$5433.00.

1874

to

1877.....C.W. Somenschmidt, a physician, was listed in the city directories as the occupant of 616 E Street.

1878/79..The western part of lot 17 was assessed to James C. Hall for \$5076.00 and the eastern part was assessed to Margaret Davis.

1880

to

1888.....The city directories list Lena Heitinger as the manager of a boarding house situated at 616 E Street.

1883/84..Lot 17 was again assessed in two parts to James C. Hall and to Margaret Davis each at a value of \$6248.00.

1892

to

1897.....The New York Biscuit Company was listed as a tenant of the building at 616 E Street.

1893/94..The western section of lot 17 was assessed to James C. Hall at a ground value of \$6621.00 and an improvement value of \$4500.00. The eastern section of the lot was assessed to Archibald H. Lowery at a value of \$8150.00 and an improvement value of \$6500.00.

1894

to

1896.....Eugene Cunningham operated a boarding house at this site according to the city directories.

1899

to

1906.....The National Biscuit Company was listed as the occupant of 616 E Street in the city directories.

1899/

1900.....The western part of lot 17 was assessed to James C. Hall for \$5076.00 and the improvements to the property were assessed \$4200.00. The eastern part of lot 17 was assessed to Woodbury Lowery, trustee, for a ground value of \$6791.00 and the improvements were assessed at \$7000.00.

1911

to

1913.....The grocer, Ida Weisenberg, was the tenant of the building according to the city directories.

During this same time span, the merchandise agency of Cockrell & Co. occupied space in the building.

1916

to

1921.....The Bedell Manufacturing Mattress Company leased space in the building.



1922

to

1926.....The City Directories list the Columbia Bedding Company as the tenant of the building.

1926.....A building permit was granted to the H. Baum and Company establishment to build a four story brick building to be enclosed by brick exterior walls and topped by a flat roof. The building was designed by the engineer G.G. Jochler without the intervention of an architect. The building filled subplot 830, or the eastern part of lot 17, in its entirety (Permit No. 8558; 4/4/1926).

To the west, on subplot 829, the lot remains vacant, however, because of the ghost silhouette imprinted on the west exterior wall of the H. Baum and Son establishment, it is evident that a building existed on subplot 829. A building permit is not available to verify the date that this building was razed.

1926

to

1955.....The Page's Laundry was listed under 618-620 E Street in the city directories. The 1919, 1924 and 1939 plat maps indicate that 618 E Street corresponded to subplot 829. However the 1948 plat maps show a shift in the addresses, and 618 E Street corresponded to subplot 849, or the lot adjacent immediately to the west of subplot 829.

1981.....The building situated on subplot 830 is currently occupied by the H. Baum and Company, furniture company.

Lot 829 is currently vacant and used as a parking facility for neighboring buildings.

## SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment  
Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map